DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 404 CG 021 085

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TITLE Counseling Psychology from 1971 to 1986: A Perspective on and an Appraisal of Current Training Emphases.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Southwestern Psychological Association (34th, Tulsa, OK, April 21-23, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; College Students; *Counselor Training; *Higher Education; Longitudinal Studies; Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes; *Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *Counseling Psychology

ABSTRACT

Observers have speculated about changes in counseling psychology over the past decade. This investigation compared the perspectives of 1971 and 1986 American Psychological Association approved counseling program directors' views on emphases given to various components of training. Subjects (N=41) were directors of approved counseling psychology training programs in the 1985-86 academic year. Subjects rated their perceptions of the adequacy of their respective training programs and the strength of their students' career interest. Results were compared to a similar survey by Schneider and Gelso taken in 1972. Results showed at least some aspects of training were remarkably stable, suggesting the past and present of counseling psychology have a common linkage. The 1986 directors perceived current training as emphasizing applied and theoretical aspects of social-emotional and educational-vocational counseling, group work, and research skills. While 1986 directors felt their training programs' strengths rested on more traditional aspects of the counseling specialty, they perceived counseling students' interests as focused on other areas such as neurological testing. (Author/ABL)

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Counseling Psychology from 1971 to 1986: A Perspective on and an Appraisal of Current Training Emphases

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Presented at the meeting of the Southwestern Psychological Association, Tulsa, OK, 1988

Abstract

Observers have speculated about changes in counseling psychology over the past decade. This investigation compared the perspectives of 1971 and 1986 APA-approved counseling program directors on emphases given to various components of training and found no changes over the 15 year interval. The 1986 directors perceived current traning as emphasizing applied and theoretical aspects of social-emotional and educational-vocational counseling, group work, and research skills. While 1986 directors' felt their training programs' strengths rested on more traditional aspects of the counseling specialty, they perceived counseling students' interests as focused on other areas (e.g., neurological testing). Implications for the identity of counseling psychology and training in the specialty are discussed.

Counseling Psychology from 1971 to 1986: A Perspective on and an Appraisal of Current Training Emphases

Organized, formal training regimens are major vehicles by which transmission of a profession's skills, values, and expertise occurs. Studies of counseling psychologists have examined characteristics of their training, occupational roles, and theoretical orientations (e.g., Birk & Brooks, 1986; Fitzgerald & Osipow, 1986; Goldschmitt, Tipton, & Wiggins, 1981; Tipton, 1983; Watkins, Lopez, Campbell, & Himmell, 1986). Empirical attempts to assess formal training issues in counseling psychology are also attracting attention. Surveys on training have focused on administrative considerations (Alcorn & Nicholas, 1983; Richardson & Quinn, 1983) and components of academic preparation (Birk & Brooks, 1986; Butler & Fuhriman, 1986; Fretz, 1975; McNeill & Ingram, 1983; Richardson & Massey, 1986). Fifteen years ago Schneider and Gelso (1972) noted that directors of APA-approved counseling programs perceived training for doing social-emotional counseling, comprehension of personality theory, and training to carry out independent research as particularly strong. By contrast, preparation for doing educational-vocational counseling and comprehension of vocational development theory were perceived as receiving significantly less emphases. Schneider and Gelso (1972) commented that, while

vocational counseling and development may be unique elements of counseling psychology, wide variation existed in terms of the amount of training attention given to vocational issues.

Since Schneider and Gelso's survey, others have commented that the stature of vocational issues among counselors seems to be declining, that many new and potential counseling psychologists are losing or do not possess much interest in career counseling, and that such a trend risks weakening the identity of the counseling specialty (Fitzgerald & Osipow, 1986; Gelso, Prince, Cornfield, Payne, Royalty, & Wiley, 1985; Nathan, 1977; Osipow 1977; Pinkney & Jacobs, 1985; Watkins, 1984). Several observers also have concluded that delineation and differentiation between counseling and clinical psychology has become increasingly murky (Osipow, Cohen, Jenkins & Dostal, 1979; Tipton, 1983; Watkins, 1983). While differences between clinical and counseling psychology in areas associated with the extremes of the normality-pathology continuum seem generally agreed upon as distinguishing characteristics, the two specialities seem less discriminable with respect to issues in the midrange of the continuum (Tipton, 1985).

Historically counseling psychologists largely pursued careers in academics or counseling centers. Growing numbers of counseling psychology graduates, however, are

now obtaining employment in human services settings, with community mental health centers and private practices increasing as primary employment sites (Alcorn & Nicholas, 1982, 1983; Banikiotes, 1977, 1980; Richardson & Massey, 1986). These recent trends suggest that many counseling psychologists are finding employment in settings where the press for treatment of personal-emotional issues may supercede attention to or demand for vocational services (Watkins, 1985). Calls have also been made for expansion of training to include areas such as marriage and family counseling, group therapy, health psychology, consultation, and women's issues (Butler & Fuhriman, 1986; Richardson & Massey, 1986; Yalom, 1985). Others have suggested that both future training and initial employment settings of counseling psychologists may be affected by such factors as research skills (Hirsch & Stone, 1983; Skovholt, Stone, & Hill, 1984), eligibility to obtain licensure, and third party payments (Fretz & Mills, 1980).

Considering the above, we were interested in assessing whether the balance of personal versus vocational emphases in counseling training had shifted in present training. Additionally comparisons of other facets of training in the specialty as well as the congruence of interests of those preparing for a counseling career vis-a-vis training program emphases were explored. To address these

objectives this investigation examined contemporary training facets in counseling psychology from the perspective of the directors of APA-approved counseling training programs, and compared this assessment with the impressions gathered from directors 15 years ago (Schneider & Gelso, 1972). The perspective of the training program directors was again selected because: (a) directors are in a unique position to influence training; (b) directors' views on training may change over time; and (c) with time, personnel occupying program directors' positions change (e.g., due to retirements, job moves) resulting in programs being re-fashioned. Since Schneider and Gelso's (1972) investigation, four programs have ceased operation and one has undergone transformation to a combined professional-scientific program. Twenty five new programs appear on the 1985 roster (APA, 1985) of APA-approved counseling programs (an increase of over 100% since 1970).

An ancillary objective was to extend Schneider and Gelso's (1972) assessment in two ways. First, the present investigation studied directors' perceptions of training aspects often found in contemporary training programs that were not assessed by Schneider and Gelso (1972). These training aspects did not, from our experience, command parallel prominence in the counseling specialty 15 years previously. Second, in the present survey, program

directors' reported their impressions of the career interests of students' in their training programs. The extent to which discrepancies may exist between training programs' objectives and students' interests could have important consequences for preparation to enter the specialty.

Method

Participants

Directors of all 46 APA-approved counseling psychology training programs during the 1985-86 academic year served as the subject pool (APA, 1985). An additional three combined professional-scientific psychology programs which contained some elements of counseling psychology were not considered. Forty-one directors responded and constituted the final sample.

Instrument

The survey consisted of two parts. The first section consisted of the 11 items from Schneider and Gelso's (1972) survey of APA-approved counseling program directors as well as 11 additional items (See Table 1). The new items were intended to assess perceptions of various training components which were not surveyed by Schneider and Gelso but whose role in contemporary training the present authors construed as having some importance to the counseling specialty. For the first part of the survey, directors were asked to rate

their perceptions of the adequacy of their respective training programs on 9-point Likert scales. Anchoring descriptors for these scales (given in Table 1) replicated those used by Schneider and Gelso.

In the second half of the survey, directors reported their perceptions of the strength of their students' career interest for each of the 20 items in the first part. Part two also included six items whose content dealt primarily with professional issues. Directors rated these 28 items on 9-point Likert items with anchoring descriptions parallelling those used in the first half of the survey (see Table 1).

Procedure

In the Fall semester, 1985, the survey was mailed to all counseling program directors with an initial return rate of 68%. A follow up mail out to non-responders was made four weeks later and a final follow up to the remaining non-respondents was attempted after a second four week interval. By the Spring semester, 1986, 41 (89%) completed returns were obtained which compared favorably to Schneider and Gelso's return rate (20 of 23 directors or 87%).

Analysis

The survey data were analyzed with respect to four considerations. First, counseling program directors'

impressions of the strengths of their training programs in 1986 relative to 1971 were compared using multivariate procedures for independent samples. Second, 1986 directors' perceptions of emphases in current training programs were assessed. Similar to Schneider and Gelso's analyses, t-tests for matched samples were used to examine pairings involving the first 22 items in Table 1. Because of the large number of comparisons made for these perceptions, alpha was set at .01. Third, multivariate procedures for matched samples were used to contrast 1986 directors' perceptions of training program strengths with their impressions of contemporary students' career interests. Such contrasts assessed potential discrepancies between training program emphases and students' career interests. Finally, Table 1 presents directors' perceptions of students' interests in various professional activities.

Results

Training Effectiveness 1971 vs. 1986

The left half of Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for directors' perceptions of

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Insert Table 1 about here

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effectiveness of their training programs on the 1986 survey items with the 11 identical items used in 1971 (Schneider &

Gelso, 1972). The Hotelling T^2 statistic indicated that no significant changes in training emphases appeared over the 15 year period.

1986 Training Effectiveness

Directors' 1986 perceptions of areas of training were grouped into items rated (a) from "very weak" to "very strong" (items 1 to 8) and (b) from "very little" to "very much" (items 9 to 20). Paired t test comparisons were computed on all possible item pairings within each of these groupings.[1] In order of descending magnitude, items 1 to 8 ranked as follows: social-emotional counseling, comprehension of personality theory, group counseling/psychotherapy, comprehension of vocational theory, educational-vocational counseling, marital and family therapy, primary prevention work, and crisis intervention. Perhaps the most statistically striking result among the training aspects rated "weak" to "strong" was the greater (all ps < .001) emphasis placed on preparation to do social-emotional counseling relative to all other types of counseling services (i.e., vocational, marriage and family, crisis intervention, or primary prevention work). Perceived strength of preparation to do group therapy overshadowed that for marriage and family counseling ($p < .01$), crisis intervention ($p < .001$), and primary prevention work ($p < .001$). Training for educational-vocational counseling was

[1]A summary table of the paired t-test comparisons are available from the first author.

judged significantly ($p < .001$) stronger than training for primary prevention work and crisis intervention. However, the mean ratings for all of these counseling services suggested that they were given above average emphasis in an absolute sense. No difference emerged between the two items dealing with comprehension of personality versus vocational development theory. Emphasis given to both vocational and personality theory was less (both $ps < .001$) than that placed on doing social-emotional counseling.

Items 9 to 20, which were rated on the dimension of receiving "little" to "much" emphasis, occurred in the following descending order of magnitude: research training, use of vocational interest tests, using objective personality tests, training to supervise, psychological report writing, use of aptitude tests, consultation training, using projective tests, test construction, program evaluation, neurological testing, and administrative skills. Training to conduct independent research was perceived as receiving more (all $ps < .01$) attention than any of the other eleven facets. No differences emerged in emphasis given to using objective personality or vocational interest tests. However, directors perceived training to use both these latter types of tests superior to instruction (a) to use projective ($p <$ 01), aptitude ($p < .001$), and neurological tests ($p <$

.001); (b) in test construction ($p < .001$); and (c) for consulting, program evaluation, and administration (all $ps < .01$). Neurological testing received least ($p < .001$) emphasis relative to training in other testing procedures.

Training in supervision of other service providers received more attention than neurological testing, program evaluation, and administration (all $ps < .01$). Formal report writing received more training emphasis than projective tests, neurological tests, program evaluation, administration, and test construction (all $ps < .01$).

Consultation training was afforded more emphasis than program evaluation, neurological testing, and administrative skills (all $ps < .001$). Projective testing received more attention than neurological testing ($p < .001$) and, like training in program evaluation, was given greater attention than development of administrative skills ($p < .001$).

In an absolute scale sense, the focus of initial practicum experience was placed on personal more than on vocational counseling. However, practicum beyond the initial experience became even more ($p < .001$) centered on doing personal counseling. The mean scale ratings for administrative skill development, neurological testing, program evaluation, test construction, and projective testing suggested these aspects received less than average attention in the training programs.

1986 Program Strengths vs. Students' Interest Discrepancies

The right side of Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for directors' impressions of students' career interests for items 1 to 20. These impressions were compared to the 1986 directors' perceptions of their programs' training effectiveness on the same item using multivariate analysis of variance for repeated measures. Although data for five directors were omitted because they failed to respond to all items, the resulting multivariate analysis was significant [F (20,16) = 4.13, $p < .005$]. Table 1 also presents results of the univariate tests for the comparison of training effectiveness and student interests. Students' career interests appeared stronger than training effectiveness in the following areas: marriage and family counseling ($p < .001$), neurological testing ($p < .001$), projective testing ($p < .01$), consultation ($p < .01$), and supervision of others ($p < .05$). Training effectiveness was perceived as stronger than student's interests for the following aspects: personality theory ($p < .01$), aptitude testing ($p < .001$), vocational interest testing ($p < .001$), research training ($p < .001$), vocational theory ($p < .001$), educational-vocational counseling ($p < .001$), and test construction. The largest discrepancies between directors' perceptions of training effectiveness and students' career interests

occurred on the vocational theory and educational-vocational counseling items.

Students' Career Interests in Professional Activities

To gauge students' commitments to the profession of psychology, directors also reported their perceptions of students' career interests to several items in this domain. Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for these items (23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28). The wording of these items allowed for several potential interpretations. Consequently no statistical comparisons were made involving these aspects of student career interests and the data are presented for descriptive purposes. Eligibility for psychologist licensure (M = 8.82) and becoming a member of APA (M = 6.90) emerged as strong perceived student interests. Students' interests in other areas of professional activities were perceived as only slightly above "average".

Discussion

The current data suggest that at least some aspects of training in the counseling specialty are remarkably stable, despite recent writings indicating that a number of changes have occurred in counseling psychology over the past 10 to 15 years (cf. Richardson & Massey, 1986; Tipton, 1984; Watkins, 1983). Of the 11 items that were administered at the beginning and end of the 15 year interval, program directors' ratings showed no differences

on any. Futhermore, the relative ordering of the assessed training areas (e.g., in terms of a strong-weak dimension) remainded the same. From this perspective, the present data run counter to speculations that counseling psychology has changed and suggest instead that the past and present of the specialty have a common linkage.

While observers have speculated that vocational psychology as a cornerstone of counseling psychology is experiencing some erosion (e.g., Fitzgerald & Osipow, 1986; King & Seymour, 1982; Watkins, et al. 1986), the present findings suggest the vocational foundation of counseling psychology training programs has held its place over the past 15 years--without any increase or decrease in prominence. Consistent with the 1971 data (Schneider & Gelso, 1972), directors in 1986 perceived social-emotional counseling as receiving more emphasis in coursework and practicum than educational-vocational counseling. To reiterate Schneider and Gelso's (1972) previous interpretation of this pattern, personal counseling may be viewed as a more complex task requiring greater attention in both academic knowledge and field experience than vocational counseling.

The present comparisons of directors' perceptions of training strengths and student interests for training areas may elucidate conjectures about the changing importance of

vocational work in counseling psychology. While Fretz (1975) noted considerable agreement between students and faculty ratings of counseling curriculum coursework, the current findings suggest such agreement may not exist across all areas of training. Directors perceived their programs' strengths as resting on more traditional hallmarks of the specialty (educational-vocational work, conducting research, personality theory), but students were perceived as less interested in these areas. Conversely, students were perceived as having moderate to strong interests in marital and family counseling, using neurological tests, and consultation, but programs were perceived as significantly less effective in providing training that matched these interests. Along related lines, Birk and Brooks (1986) found some discrepancies between the importance of recent counseling psychology graduates' various job activities and their perceptions of the adequacy of their training for those activities. The current data intimate that (a) a noticeable tension exists between some current program emphases and students' perceived interests in training and (b) students' perceived interests seem consistent with (and in part may be stimulating) calls for more diversified training in counseling psychology (Birk & Brooks, 1986; Fitzgerald & Osipow, 1986; Robbins, May, & Corazzini, 1985; Watkins et al., 1986).

Are training emphases in counseling programs responsive or moving too cautiously in relation to meeting contemporary social, economic, and political trends? King and Seymour (1982) observed that the curriculum in counseling seemed to change in response to new ideas about the identity of counseling and in response to pressures brought about by students. Licensure status and social-emotional counseling, for example, seem strong interests for counseling trainees--perhaps reflecting counseling psychologists shifting more into applied work (Fitzgerald & Osipow, 1986). To the extent that counseling psychology programs equip students for a marketplace whose present priorities may be in flux and future directions unknown, considered judgement must be exercised to balance adequate preparation against calls for change in current training. We would argue that adequately prepared trainees should be sufficiently grounded in the core skills and body of knowledge of counseling psychology at the least. Given such a malleable base, such trainees would (and hopefully have been trained to) be able to adapt to a range of specific employment requirements.

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Director's Perceptions of Training Effectiveness (1971 vs. 1986) and of Training Effectiveness versus Student Interests (1986)

Survey Item	Training Effectiveness 1971 (n = 20) M	SD	Training Effectiveness 1986 (n = 41) M	SD	1986 (n = 36) Training Effectiveness M	SD	1986 (n = 36) Student Interests M	SD	F[a]
1. Preparedness for doing educational-vocational counseling	5.95	2.35	6.56	1.72	6.56	1.73	4.28	1.81	84.65***
2. Preparedness for doing social-emotional counseling	7.90	1.07	8.12	1.09	8.11	1.12	8.44	.65	2.18
3. Preparedness for doing marital and family counseling			5.68	2.02	5.53	2.09	7.00	.98	17.85***
4. Preparedness for doing crisis intervention			5.37	1.59	5.39	1.54	5.63	1.52	.65
5. Preparedness for doing group counseling/psychotherapy			6.73	1.53	6.83	1.52	6.58	1.18	.83
6. Preparedness for doing primary prevention work			5.60	1.96	5.64	1.90	5.42	1.75	.88
7. Comprehension of personality theory	7.15	1.18	6.76	1.39	6.83	1.34	6.08	1.57	7.64**
8. Comprehension of vocational development theory	6.60	1.69	6.63	1.59	6.64	1.62	4.63	1.64	60.00***
9. Training in the use of projective tests in counseling	4.05	2.28	4.92	2.45	5.00	2.46	6.17	1.54	9.27**
10. Training in the use of vocational interest tests in counseling	5.85	2.51	6.51	1.52	6.50	1.54	5.11	1.30	29.44***
11. Training in the use of aptitude tests in counseling	5.75	1.94	5.65	1.62	5.72	1.61	4.81	1.31	14.95***
12. Training in the use of objective personality tests in counseling	5.80	1.11	6.48	1.32	6.44	1.34	6.52	1.29	.07
13. Training in the use of neurological tests			3.87	1.82	3.94	1.82	5.41	1.50	34.58***
14. Training in supervision of other service providers			5.93	1.99	6.00	2.03	6.61	1.29	4.67*
15. Training in writing formal skills			5.92	1.70	6.08	1.59	6.22	1.51	.32
16. Training in program evaluation			4.45	1.85	4.56	1.84	4.67	1.20	.14
17. Training in administration skills			3.65	1.72	3.78	1.68	4.19	1.31	1.97
18. Training in test construction			4.55	1.81	4.53	1.83	3.81	1.28	9.49**
19. Training in consultation			5.34	1.85	5.39	1.81	6.14	1.48	9.00**
20. Training to do independent research in counseling psychology	7.65	1.27	7.38	1.19	7.33	1.22	5.88	1.43	37.08**
21. Major focal point of initial practicum training	4.00	2.38	3.83	2.07					
22. Major focal point of practicums beyond the initial practicum	2.79	1.61	2.65	1.18					
23. Being active in Division 17							5.60[b]	1.41	
24. Becoming a member of APA							6.93[b]	1.72	
25. Meeting requirements to be eligible for state licensure as a psychologist							8.82[b]	.39	
26. Preparing for a career in teaching/academics							5.15[b]	1.39	
27. Making contributions to the literature (e.g., books, professional journals)							5.61[b]	1.43	
28. Making presentations at professional meetings							5.92[b]	1.47	

Note. Items 1 to 8 were rated on a "very weak" (1) to "very strong" (9) dimension, and items 9 to 20 and items 23 to 28 on a "very little" (1) to "very much" (9) dimension. On items 21 and 22, the numeral 1 on a 1-9 scale was labeled "much more on personal than vocational," 9 was labeled "much more on vocational than personal," and 5 was labeled "about the same for personal and vocational counseling." All critical values are for two-tailed tests and minus signs have been deleted.

[a] df = 1,35; [b] n = 41.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

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